FEATURES

Campus recycling efforts undermined

By Nancy Walter

This fall, Middlebury students implemented a new, campus-wide program to reduce the amount of waste produced by the college community. The recycling program was designed during the fall and winter of last year by students in Steve Trombulak's Environmental Policy 401 class. A response to the increasing concerns about the environment, the program aimed to address the problem of solid waste in Vermont as well as the difficulty in developing a cost-effective method of reducing and treating waste at Middlebury.

Recent legislation in Vermont mandated the closing of landfills protected by thick plastic linings by 1991. Faced with increased dumping costs and pressure to recylce due to its responsibility to the environment, the college needed a simple, effective means of recycling.

During its first year in action, Middlebury's recycling effort has largely been criticized as being neither simple nor effective. The system could be much more effective," argued Matt Stewart '90, who resigned from the program due to what he saw as its inefficiencies. "It has to be made more practical for everyone to use.

Under the direction of Stewart, Resident House Assistant Matt Longman '89, a team of workers has placed blue bins in both residential and non-residential building, as well as in dorms and other recreational areas. Many critics feel that these bins are not simple enough to encourage use. It is easier to save paper in the trash can than walk down the flights of stairs to recycle.

If the college did provide additional bins there is no guarantee it would be used properly. "I've seen vomi in the recycling bin," Stewart said, "and people using them to add Middlebury's efforts are doing more harm than good.

The program makes recycling look ineffective.

Lack of commitment to the program has been a problem among the general college community, many critics feel, but among members of the recycling team as well. Student workers who hold part-time jobs are completely responsible for collection routes. "They can't lift the bins," Stewart lamented. "We don't have the power to do anything.

The programs needs workers who are physically capable of doing the job. Right now, it's run too much like a business.

Longman and his crew work a four-day week, with three students on the job each of these days. Despite this, he feels this structure is building a sense of commitment to the program's goals among his workers. "They really have worked hard,

Stewart agreed. The fund would support the second and third phases of the James Bay project, in which a system of large reservoirs and generating stations in the James Bay, just north of the Hudson Bay. The second phase would increase the surface area of the reservoir, while the third would provide more storage development and augmentation equipment in that area.

Supporters of the new contract argue that changes are necessary in New England, and the expanded Hydro-Québec facilities would supply more power at cheaper costs. This idea is particularly attractive to businesses. For the pro-contract advocates, the Canadian alternative is preferable to nuclear plants or coal plants, and Vermonters support the fact that the company is not in their own backyard.

The backdyard of James Bay happens to be in in the area of Cree and Inuit Indians, who are the people's partners. Phase I flooded four million square miles of the ancestral hunting grounds of these peoples, and has interfered with their traditional way of life.

The proposed and observed ecological effects of the James Bay project, according to Dr. Hilmer Cronin-Lajembe, include land and water losses from flooding, the re-release of carbon into the ozone layer due to burning of trees in the area, erosion of coastal areas, reduction of water resources, and the accumulation of mercury toxic levels of fish in the dama, and an increased likelihood of respiratory problems resulting from the precipitation of water in the region. These impacts are specifically detrimental to the Cree and Inuit livelihoods.

In an effort to raise awareness in New England about the negative side of Hydro-Québec, about forty representatives of the Cree and Inuit, who feel they have been unfairly treated, are participating in a symbolic cause journey from James Bay to New York City. Ten Indian times are rowing the canoe, which is being accompanied by a bus, and the group is stopping at cities along the way to New York, where they plan to be on Earth Day.

Saturday night, April 26th, the Inuit protesters stopped in Middlebury to communicate their concerns about other things they made prominent available in the issue and provided all those people and companies in New Vermont opening approval of the contract could write.

Cree and Inuit spokespeople blame Hydro-Québec's capacity to push too far on the floor of Monroe Hall. Anger was growning among those who spoke about what Hydro-Québec did to the Cree and Inuit in the Quebec project, each topic in which their native tongue was made to suffer. Outsiders came to their aid and they helped to teach Cree and Inuit the crowd about some of their recent struggles.

Corey Chase '92, a New York Times staff reporter, said the earth is "worthless to the people who are fighting for it...but I enjoyed it because I'm interested in the issue."